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The Kite Runner—Pages 1 – 124

**Summary:** The first third of Khaled Hosseini’s book, *The Kite Runner*, is based around the main character, Amir’s, recollection of his childhood. The first sentence of this book states, “I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975,” which sets not only a curious question in my mind, but also the scene for majority of what I have read so far. After what seems to be what is happening presently in Amir’s life, he begins to describe several memories in detail from his childhood. He recalls this boy, Hassan, who was his father’s servant’s son. The pair grew up together because Hassan’s father, Ali, and Amir’s father, Baba, were very close. In fact Hassan and Amir even breastfed from the same woman since both their mothers had disappeared when they were infants (Hassan’s mother ran away and Amir’s mother died giving birth to him). Amir goes on to explain that even though Hassan and him always played together and got along very well, he would never describe him as a friend because he was a Hazara. In Afghanistan Hazara’s were openly discriminated against and for a person of Amir’s status to be friends with a Hazara was frowned upon.

When Amir is not describing a specific memory that involved him and Hassan, he expresses how he longs to get attention from his father. Amir explains that because he was the cause of his mother’s death, Baba resents him for it; it also doesn’t help that Amir and Baba have conflicting interests. Baba is a very intimidating leader who has made a habit of doing things that people believed were impossible for him to accomplish (he designed an orphanage even though he is not an architect and has a successful business even though no one believed he knew anything about running one) while Amir is more of a quiet follower who likes to lose himself in books or the stories he writes. Amir openly and repeatedly states how he wishes that for once just him and Baba could go somewhere and have a good time, since Hassan usually tags along with them. He is jealous that Hassan attracts as much attention as he does without even trying, along with several other traits of Hassan (like being unmistakably loyal, Hassan often time uses the quote “For you, a thousand times over” when Amir asks something of him).

The event that was the pivotal point in Amir’s life involved Hassan and him participating in one of Afghanistan’s oldest traditions, kite flying. It is a great honor in Afghanistan for you to be the winner of this competition as well as being the one who runs the last kite (meaning people chased after the last kite that got cut down and the capture of the kite got to keep it as another type of an award). Trying to prove himself to his father, Amir joins up once again with Hassan with hopes of winning this competition. Amir flies the kite during the competition, meaning that he was the one cutting down the competition’s kites as well as keeping his in the air, while Hassan prepare to run the final kite, which he has proven to be extremely good at in the previous years. Not wanting to fail Baba, Amir finds himself trying even harder this year to win, and to his surprise he does. With his kite being the only one left in the sky, Hassan takes off so that he can secure the second place kite that is drifting back onto the Earth’s surface. After Amir returns to his house and gets congratulated by Baba, he too takes off after Hassan in search of the kite so that Baba would be even more proud of him.

After hours of searching for both Hassan and the kite, Amir gives up and begins to head home when suddenly he stumbles across a troubling scene. In Amir’s neighborhood there were these three much bigger and older kids who threatened to beat up Amir and Hassan and they were preparing to make that claim true, at least the part about Hassan anyway. The three bullies cornered Hassan in a back alley and demanded him to hand over the second place kite that was in his possession. Knowing that Amir truly wanted the kite, Hassan denies the bullies it and in response the bullies pin him to the ground. In order to punish the Hazara for defying a direct order, the leader of the bullies, Assef, makes the decision to rape him. During the entire event, Amir is hiding around the corner of the alley debating on whether or not he should stand up for the one person who had always stood up for him. Much to my disappointment, Amir runs away from the scene.

The events that follow this section of the book involve Amir’s attempts of getting rid of Ali and Hassan for he could not deal with the constant reminder of his cowardice, Ali and Hassan’s decisions to finally leave which causes much pain for Baba, and finally Amir and Baba’s escape from Afghanistan because the Russians where invading. The last thing I read was one of Amir’s neighbors committing suicide because his son did not survive the escape.

**Analysis:** When addressing this book, two main thoughts come to my mind immediately. The first thought is of my disappointment in Amir. Hassan was his trusted companion, since he refuses to address him as a friend, who has done nothing but stand up for him, and the one time that Hassan truly needs Amir he runs away. I don’t care what Amir’s society dictates; if you run away from a person in need, especially if you have to debate about running, then you are nothing more than a coward. At the beginning of this memory I was happy because winning the kite flying competition meant that Amir was finally going to get some deserved attention from his father. However, after reading that he sacrificed Hassan’s innocence so that way Baba would be even more proud of him, I’m disgusted by Amir. I realize that Hassan’s assailants were the biggest and most frightening bullies in the neighborhood and that standing up to them would endanger Amir as well, but now he has to live with the fact that he abandoned the one person who truly valued him. I cannot imagine allowing someone I’m close to get hurt in that way, it’s a disgrace and poor Hassan is trying to move pass this traumatic event and Amir wants nothing to do with him. Amir was basically Hassan’s life and now that he’s pushed him away, I can’t imagine how depressed Hassan must be. I’m hoping that Amir won’t be able to get away with this neglect. I want him to have to face Hassan face to face and at least attempt to apologize for his cowardice, but because Ali and Hassan are now in some other location, I don’t know if that will ever happen.

The second thought involves figuring out who the story revolves around. Of course the Amir is basically the narrator of the events that have happened so far, but is this story shaped around him? I feel like Hassan, even though he is not a specific character at the moment, has a bigger impact on the events to come or perhaps the rape event will continue to shape Amir’s decisions. It’s definitely between the two.

**Application:** Inherent human characteristics are weaved throughout this book, but the most prominent ones that I can think of at the moment are cowardice and loyalty which just so happen to be the defining characteristics of Amir and Hassan. I’ve already mentioned and explained Amir’s cowardice, but the reason why I feel this is an inherent human characteristic is because everyone possesses it. Of course some people act on it more than others, but it’s still in everyone. I find it odd how we, meaning people, as a collective group value bravery and confidence and yet majority of us have a hard time expressing these characteristics. When a person is truly in trouble, like Hassan was in this section, majority of us would react in the way Amir did. For some reason we find cowardice to be a much easier path to take even though we are well aware of the fact that we will feel guilty after the event that requires our bravery has passed.

The other characteristic, loyalty, is one that I feel is inherent, but in a much more covert way than cowardice. As a society we all express loyalty whether we know it or not through our actions towards our family. Majority of people feel the need to stand by their family regardless of what situation is occurring, which is what I feel Hassan did for Amir because he probably felt that Amir was like his brother (sadly the feeling doesn’t appear to be mutual, but I’d rather not rant about it again). Personally, I believe that being patriotic is another way of expressing loyalty, but to our entire nation, not just our immediate families.